

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SY-10 L-03 H-03 CIAE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00

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FM AMEMBASSY ROME

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3602

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINS, ASEC, IT

SUBJECT: BOMB THREAT AT EMBASSY JANUARY 21

REF: ROME 0900

1. REFTTEL REPORTED ARREST OF ITALIAN NATIONAL FOLLOWING BOMB THREAT HOAX AGAINST EMBASSY ROME IN ATTEMPT TO EXTORT ONE HUNDRED MILLION LIRE (170,000 DOLLARS). THE SUSPECT IS BEING HELD IN A ROME PRISON WHILE INVESTIGATION CONTINUES.

2. FOLLOWING ARREST, EMBASSY OFFICERS WHO RECEIVED THREAT AND COOPERATED IN ORDER TO BRING ABOUT ARREST HAVE TAKEN NORMAL STEPS TO ASSIST LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICIALS IN ORDER TO BRING CULPRIT TO JUSTICE. AT POLICE REQUEST, THEY PROVIDED POLICE SIGNED STATEMENTS OF FACT CONCERNING THE INCIDENT AND THEIR OWN PARTICIPATION. IN ACCORDANCE WITH ITALIAN PRACTICE, CASE WAS SUBSEQUENTLY TURNED OVER TO PROSECUTING ATTORNEY, WHO ASKED EMBASSY OFFICERS TO APPEAR IN HIS CHAMBERS MARCH 5 FOR THE PURPOSE OF FURTHER REVIEWING THE INCIDENT IN PREPARATION FOR TRIAL. AT THIS INTERVIEW EACH OFFICER SIGNED A SHORT STATEMENT BASED ON HIS RECOLLECTION OF THE EVENT AND CERTAIN QUESTIONS POSED BY THE PROSECUTING ATTORNEY ON THE BASIS OF THE PREVIOUS DEPOSITION.

3. ALTHOUGH PROSECUTING ATTORNEY HAS NOT COMMENTED TO US ON TRIAL PLANS, WE BELIEVE THAT DEPARTMENT SHOULD NOW
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CONSIDER WHAT ACTION SHOULD BE TAKEN IN EVENT GOI JUDICIAL

AUTHORITIES ASK EMBOFFS TO TESTIFY AT A POSSIBLE TRIAL, THUS RAISING QUESTION OF WAIVER OF DIPLOMATIC IMMUNITY. WE BELIEVE THAT THE DEPARTMENT SHOULD GRANT A WAIVER IN THE EVENT THIS BECOMES NECESSARY. THIS, IN OUR OPINION, WOULD BE THE ONLY COURSE CONSISTENT WITH OUR FIRM POSITION ON THE INTERNATIONAL DETERRENCE OF TERRORISM AND OUR DESIRE THAT JUSTICE BE DONE ONCE A TERRORIST IS APPREHENDED. IT WOULD BE INCOMPREHENSIBLE TO ITALIAN AUTHORITIES, IN LIGHT OF THE CONSISTENT EMPHASIS WE HAVE PUT ON THIS MATTER, FOR EMBASSY OFFICERS TO BE DENIED PERMISSION TO PARTICIPATE IN THE TRIAL. WE FAIL TO SEE HOW THE GOI COULD TAKE SERIOUSLY OUR CONCERN FOR INTERNATIONAL MEASURES TO COMBAT TERRORISM, MUCH LESS OUR IMMEDIATE CONCERN FOR MISSION SECURITY, WERE WE TO APPEAR TO BE UNWILLING TO DO WHAT IS NECESSARY TO BRING A CULPRIT TO JUSTICE. THE FACTS THAT THIS WAS A HOAX RATHER THAN AN ACTUAL TERRORIST ATTACK, AND THAT IT WAS PRIVATELY RATHER THAN POLITICALLY INSTIGATED, IN NO WAY DIMINISH THE NECESSITY FOR US TO DO ALL WE CAN TO DISCOURAGE SUCH ACTS IN THE FUTURE.

4. NATURALLY, WE WILL EXPLORE ALL THE POSSIBILITIES OF COOPERATION WITH ITALIAN JUDICIAL AUTHORITIES WHICH WOULD NOT REQUIRE THE DEPARTMENT TO MAKE A DECISION ON WAIVER OF IMMUNITY. NEVERTHELESS, WE WISH TO SUBMIT OUR VIEWS ON THIS QUESTION FOR THE DEPARTMENT'S CONSIDERATION SHOULD SUCH A DECISION BE NECESSARY.

5. WE WOULD APPRECIATE DEPARTMENT'S REACTION TO THE ABOVE. VOLPE

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